



## Borough of Telford and Wrekin Cabinet 15 December 2022 Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site – Supplementary Planning Document (Consultation Version)

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Richard Overton – Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement & Transport
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Katherine Kynaston – Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure
<b>Service Area:</b>	Strategic Planning
<b>Report Author:</b>	Gavin Ashford – Strategic Planning Team Leader
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Ironbridge Gorge and Madeley & Sutton Hill
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Yes - 25/05/22
<b>Report considered by:</b>	SMT – 11/10/22 Business Briefing - 17/11/22 Cabinet – 15/12/22

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### 1.0 Recommendations for decision:

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1. Approve the consultation version of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document
- 1.2. Delegate authority to the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure (and any other officer authorised in writing by this postholder) to consult.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult on the draft Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Following consultation the SPD will be brought back to Cabinet for adoption.

## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1. The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site (WHS) is an internationally recognised area of outstanding universal value and one of seven designated conservation areas in the borough. UNESCO awarded the gorge World Heritage Site status in 1986 in recognition of the areas record of innovation during the Industrial Revolution. The 'Outstanding Universal Value' (or OUV) of the area is captured in the many historical sites, landscape, setting of the gorge and the social history of the area.
- 3.2. The value of designation has helped the area maintain a strong visitor economy, promote the wider borough as a place to visit, live, work and invest and has also helped secure investment into ground stabilisation works and conservation projects in the WHS area.
- 3.3. The purpose of the World Heritage Site SPD is to provide locally distinctive planning guidance to help protect the gorge and support sustainable development within the WHS. The SPD clarifies why the protection of the OUV is of such importance and it will form part of a suite of documents including the WHS Management Plan that set out how the area will be protected and managed. The WHS boundary extends into Shropshire and therefore the SPD will be used by both Local Planning Authorities to help determine planning applications in their respective areas.
- 3.4. The Council place a high priority on its commitment to protecting the gorge and work closely with key stakeholders to achieve this including the WHS Steering Group, Historic England and Icomos UK.
- 3.5. The purpose of this report is to present the consultation version of the SPD to Cabinet for approval. This will be followed by a 6 week period of public consultation and engagement with stakeholders between early January and February 2023.

## **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

- 4.1 The Ironbridge Gorge is a historically significant area and contains a number of scheduled ancient monuments not least the Ironbridge itself. The UNESCO designation of WHS status, awarded in 1986, provides international recognition of the value of the area, this is encapsulated by its Outstanding Universal Value or OUV. The Ironbridge Gorge is also a conservation area and enjoys additional protection under that designation.

*What is Outstanding Universal Value? - "Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend*

*national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole”.*

- 4.2. The overarching aim of this SPD is to provide guidance for protecting and enhancing the OUV of the WHS, preventing loss through deterioration and disappearance of its heritage value. This SPD will set out how the planning system will seek to fulfil the responsibilities and opportunities that arise from WHS status.

The SPD will help:

- Protect the WHS
  - Conserve the WHS
  - Present and transmit to future generations the importance of the WHS
  - Encourage investment and development to secure a healthy economy and support regeneration.
- 4.3. There are a significant number of heritage assets within the WHS. This includes; 375 listed buildings, 7 scheduled ancient monuments, buildings of local interest and 10 internationally significant museums. The protection and preservation of these sites, the historic character of the area and the green and natural environment is a key focus for the SPD.
- 4.4. An added benefit of the Councils responsibility to protect and conserve the WHS and conservation area is the contribution of the WHS to the success of the boroughs visitor economy and economy in general. The WHS attracts around 1 million visitors a year and generates an estimated £43m for the boroughs economy. It is therefore important that there is a robust plan for managing and protecting the area.
- 4.5. Alongside bringing the SPD forward the Council will, be:
- Updating the Ironbridge Gorge WHS Management Plan
  - Consulting on a revised boundary for the Severn Gorge Conservation Area
  - Issuing a revised Article 4 Directive for the Severn Gorge Conservation Area

### **Opportunities**

- 4.6. The guidance contained in the SPD provides the opportunity to address a range of other matters including promoting and ensuring appropriate repair techniques, bringing redundant buildings back into use whilst retaining internal and external original features, and the repair and reinstatement of historical features
- 4.7. The SPD also provides an opportunity to address climate change pressures within the WHS / conservation area. There are many listed buildings that have residential and business uses, improving the thermal and energy efficiency of buildings will help tackle climate change and reduce the running costs of such buildings thereby improving there long term sustainability. The SPD will provide guidance on where appropriate measures can be put in place to address climate change in the WHS area.

### **Planning context**

- 4.8. The planning system affords World Heritage Sites a very high level of protection through the National Planning Policy Framework which states that plan making bodies should aim to satisfy the following principles:
- Protecting the WHS and its setting, including any buffer zone, from inappropriate development;
  - Striking a balance between the needs of conservation, biodiversity, access, the interests of the local community, the public benefits of a development and the sustainable economic use of the World Heritage in its setting, including any buffer zone;
  - Protecting a WHS and its setting from the effect of changes which are relatively minor but which, on a cumulative basis, could have significant effect;
  - Enhancing the WHS and its setting where appropriate and possible through positive management; and
  - Protecting the WHS and its setting from climate change but ensuring that mitigation and adaptation is not at the expense of integrity or authenticity.
- 4.9. The Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Policy BE3 provides a robust planning policy protection for the WHS. A wider suite of policies provide protection for assets within the gorge itself including; listed buildings (BE4), conservation areas (BE5), buildings of local interest (BE6), archaeology and scheduled ancient monuments (BE8) and land stability (BE10).

### **How the SPD will be used**

- 4.10. The Council has the power to introduce SPD's under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Part 5. SPD documents provide the opportunity for additional detailed planning guidance over and above planning policy set out in local development plans. This provides residents, businesses and other organisations with certainty when submitting planning applications.
- 4.11. The SPD will provide residents, business and organisations that intend to submit planning applications, planning guidance in the following areas;
- within the boundaries of the WHS; and
  - where proposals impact the setting of the WHS.
- 4.12. The guidance will help applicants submit planning applications that take full account of the areas OUV in relation to proposals for development such as:
- Alternations, extensions and refurbishment of existing residential and commercial properties
  - Change of use from one development type to another
  - New development proposals
  - Applications relating to renewable energy

- 4.13. A portion of the WHS is located within Shropshire Councils administrative area. The SPD, on adoption, will be used by Shropshire Council as part of the planning process for applications within its administrative area.

### **Consultation and engagement**

- 4.14. Consultation and engagement will be a key part of developing the SPD and the following communications activity is planned:
- Direct engagement with stakeholder organisations including:
    - ICOMOS UK and Historic England
    - WHS Steering Group
    - Parish Councils
  - Use of social media channels and Council website.
  - Public engagement sessions in the WHS area
- 4.15. As the WHS boundary south of the river Severn covers some areas that are within the administrative boundary of Shropshire the SPD will, go to Shropshire Councils Cabinet on the 14 December. This will be followed by a 6 week period of public consultation and engagement with stakeholders between early January and February 2023. This will be a joint consultation across both Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Council areas of the WHS.

## **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Protection of the OUV of the WHS is considered to be of paramount importance. Progressing the SPD will help do this and also help balance the need for conservation with pressures such as adapting to climate change. Not progressing the SPD could lead to progressive deterioration of the conservation aspects of the area which could ultimately lead to the loss of WHS status and is therefore not an option.

## **6.0 Key Risks**

- 6.1 The suite of documents including the WHS Management Plan and the SPD will form the framework for protection of the areas OUV. The SPD will also set recommendations made in the Severn Gorge Conversation Area Management Plan for the Gorge into a formal planning document. Not bringing forward the SPD could adversely impact the OUV of the Gorge area and risk its status as a WHS.
- 6.2. The Council are taking a proactive approach (in partnership with Shropshire Council) to ensure that the risk to the WHS is minimised. UNESCO have, where they feel the OUV is threatened, remove WHS status from sites.
- 6.3. There are a number of potential risks to the OUV of the WHS that the SPD can help address, this includes:
- **Development proposals that are poorly designed risking the character of the area** – the SPD will provide guidance tailored to the WHS area for residents and businesses intending to submit planning applications.

- **Increased risk of flooding events and the need to balance the protection of property and life with the heritage of the area** – the SPD will help provide planning guidance for particular issues such as property level flood defences.
- **The need to conserve and maintain heritage assets whilst encouraging sustainable, low carbon development** – Guidance in the SPD will help support appropriate ‘climate ready’ development such as renewable energy and electric vehicle infrastructure.
- **Minimising potentially negative impacts, associated with a successful visitor economy** – the SPD will provide planning guidance on infrastructure and commercial developments.

## **7.0 Council Priorities**

7.1 The report recommendations link to the following Council priorities:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community;
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy;
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- Our natural environment is protected, and the Council has a leading role in addressing the climate emergency;
- A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

8.1 The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will allow the Council to continue to make the most effective use of its resources and support the efficient delivery of the Planning application process. The consultation and engagement process will be a key part of developing the SPD, the activities planned within this report along with subsequent implementation of the SPD will be met from within existing resources and budgets.

## **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

9.1 SPDs should build on and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. Regulations 11 to 16 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing, consulting on and adopting SPDs. An SPD must not conflict with the Local Plan. The policies within the Council’s Local Plan are significant in determining planning applications as proposals are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework states that SPD’s add further detail to the policies in the Council’s Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues and are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the Council’s Local Plan. Approval of an SPD is a Cabinet function.

9.2. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Ward Implications**

10.0 The proposals contained in this report and attached draft SPD will, once fully adopted, bring in additional planning guidance for the wards of Ironbridge and Madeley & Sutton Hill. The guidance will help make it easier and more consistent for residents and businesses when considering whether proposals require planning permission in relation to the WHS.

## **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

11.1 The proposals contained in the draft SPD will provide additional planning guidance regarding issues such as thermal insulation in homes within the WHS area. This will help reduce running costs, improve the energy efficiency of properties and contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents.

11.2. The introduction of planning guidance will help provide businesses with guidance in advance of submitting planning applications. This will help ensure well developed planning proposals can be submitted that will be considered in a full and timely manner. Supporting businesses and the visitor economy will increase private investment, create new jobs and safeguard others, provide supply chain opportunities and increase visitor spend.

## **12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

12.1 There are no specific negative impacts related to equality and diversity, or the armed forces community currently.

12.2. The SPD reinforces the Unesco principles of diversity, equity and equality, respect for human rights, engagement and consultation.

12.3 The Council will consult as per the Statement of Community Involvement, this includes taking account of the needs of the local community who have a slightly older age profile in the WHS area than the rest of the borough. As well as other measures, we will ensure:

- Materials will be made available via the Council website including explanations of what the proposals will mean for residents and businesses, and alternative formats will be available on request
- Responses can be received e-mail, written correspondence and (at public engagement sessions) in person
- Public engagement venues will be accessible to the whole community and the consultation will be advertised widely within the WHS area using traditional methods as well as digital.

## **13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

13.1 The following climate change implications are addressed by these proposals:

- **Resource Efficiency** - The proposals in the draft SPD document consider how to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and the appropriate use of renewable energy in the WHS.
- **Climate Change** - The proposals will help to minimise carbon emissions by providing guidance on adapting buildings for climate change.
- **Waste** - No specific impacts
- **Biodiversity** - No specific impacts
- **Travel and Transport Options** - The proposals will help adapt the WHS toward more sustainable modes of travel and includes guidance on the appropriate installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

#### 14.0 Background Papers

Not Applicable

#### 15.0 Appendices

A Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site – Supplementary Planning Document – Consultation Version

#### 16.0 Report Sign Off

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date signed off</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Equality & Diversity	15/06/2022	16/06/2022	RT
Legal	15/06/2022	24/11/2022	SH
Finance	15/06/2022	24/11/2022	AM